

7
*Christian Liberty and Love represented, and
earnestly recommended.*

A
S E R M O N

Preached at

Little St. HELEN'S, *693.e.g.*

On the 1st of *August*, 1752.

TO THE
S O C I E T Y
T H A T

Supports the LORD'S-DAY Morning
LECTURE there.

By JOHN RICHARDSON. *R*

Published at the Request of the GENTLEMEN
then present.

L O N D O N,

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Christian Science

SE R M O N

Y T E I O 2

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1. 10 100

TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
ARTHUR ONSLOW, Esq;

SPEAKER of the HONOURABLE
HOUSE OF COMMONS.

S I R,

HAVING had the honour
and high pleasure to hear you
say, Liberty was so rich a jewel that
rather than it should be lost, some
degree of its corruption, however
undesirable, must be born with. I
therefore humbly presume to shelter
this imperfect discourse under your
favourable patronage; being well
assured, the important subject of it
can need no apology, tho' the man-
ner of treating so glorious a theme,
may possibly need all that candor for
which you are so eminent. It might
seem arrogant in me, as it would be
quite superfluous, to pretend to ac-
quaint

ii DEDICATION.

quaint the world, with what the loud voice of fame has long since sounded throughout all Europe. I mean, Sir, your indefatigable zeal in the service of your country, your friendship for liberty, and to men of integrity without distinction of parties, conjoined with the sublimest talents of genius and eloquence. But I dare not any farther intrude on those precious moments, so advantageously employed for the public weal, only by just begging leave to mention, with what a peculiar satisfaction, as well as profound veneration, I embrace this opportunity of subscribing myself,

S I R,

Your most obliged,

Most obedient, and

Humble Servant,

J. RICHARDSON.

G A L. V. 13.

*For brethren, ye have been called
unto liberty; only use not liberty
for an occasion to the flesh, but
by love serve one another.*

WE are this day assembled together to mention the loving kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, towards his British Israel, which he hath bestowed on them, according to his mercy and according to the multitude of his loving-kindnesses. I could wish there was reason to add with our evangelical prophet, every sentence of what follows as applicable to us: For he said, surely they are my people, children that will not lye, so he was their saviour. Indeed our national salvations have been in many respects almost as wonderful as those of God's peculiar people of old. We are a nation highly favoured, a people saved by the Lord who
B expects

expects in return our solemn and chearful praises. That tribute of acknowledgment which is his due he may justly claim. 'Tis indeed amazing condescension in the high and lofty one to admit our feeble essays this way, yet such is his goodness as to declare ; *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.* Without taking any present notice of the context, I shall address myself immediately to consider the words of our text, in which we have,

- I. A glorious privilege pointed out and recommended, viz. liberty.
- II. We have a very proper caution subjoined ; not to abuse it, only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh.
- III. A duty enjoined, extremely conducive to our happiness ; but by love serve one another.

I. Here is a glorious privilege pointed out and recommended, and that is liberty : By which term I humbly apprehend, our apostle primarily means, a release from the ceremonial dispensation, and no doubt this might be justly deemed a very signal and important blessing, since it necessarily implies not only the abolition of numerous, burthensome rites and costly puerile observances which rendered that oeconomy vastly inferior to a milder and more gracious, as well as manly, rational, and

and spiritual frame of worship, but as it farther supposes the great Messiah had made his appearance in our world, since with reference to him were most of those ceremonies ordained, the law having a shadow of good things to come, while the body or substance of those temporary institutions was no less than Christ himself: *Heb. x. 1.* compared with *Col. ii. 17* *.

2. Our inspired writer may farther intend, as is more than probable from several hints in this epistle, freedom from the guilt of sin; or, our obnoxiousness to suffer punishment pursuant to the sanction of the divine law, and from terrors of conscience thro' the atonement of Christ: Thus he observes, chap. iii. 13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*, or treated as tho' he had been a malefactor and transgressor, as elsewhere God the

B 2

father

* I can't but think there are two extremes on this head of types, a term warranted by the apostle, *1 Cor. x. 6.* and elsewhere. What we there render examples, is in the original *τύποι*; one is, that the whole of the levitical administration had no reference to the good things of the gospel, but intirely concerned the Jews as a body politic, which if true, the epistle to the Hebrews, with several other passages of the new testament, can have very little meaning. The other extreme is, to make every thing that was then transacted typical and figurative, as fancy leads one, which I fear has been the unhappy occasion not only of strengthening the prejudices of our modern deists against revelation, but of disgusting some who wear the christian name against the doctrine of types in general.

father is said to have *made him sin*, i. e. a sin-offering for us by an usual hebraism, when he *knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 2. or as the same apostle expresses it in another place, *that we might be constituted righteous*, [*κατασυννοίας*] Rom. v. 19. i. e. intituled to pardon, life and happiness on account of what Jesus has suffered and performed as the surety and substitute of all penitent believing sinners.

3. True christians are favoured with deliverance from the power of corrupt principles and evil habits, of which more hereafter, which therefore we shall not now enlarge on.

4. The right of private judgment, as it is commonly stiled, or of judging for ourselves in matters of religion, is another of those branches of liberty we are called to under the gospel oeconomy. Thus we are exhorted by St. Paul, the inspired writer of this epistle, in another excellent letter of his to the church at Thessalonica, chap. v. 21. *Prove all things: hold fast that which is good. Search the scriptures*, says our divine Saviour, *for in them*, however wrong your sentiments may be in other respects, even ye Scribes and Pharisees *think ye have eternal life*, John v. 39. *I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say*, is the advice of the great apostle of the Gentiles. By the way, what becomes of the infallible decision of his

holiness at Rome, since no less a person than the great St. Paul with all his inspiration and extraordinary talents, exhorts the good people to whom he wrote to exercise their right of personal or private judgment. Much less have the leaders of any sect, the principal persons of any inferior party among protestants, far less, may they legally assume a right of dictating to any in the grand affairs of religion and eternal salvation. St. Paul himself claimed no dominion over the faith and consciences of men, but professed himself only an helper of their sacred joy. And it is recorded to the praise of the inhabitants of Berea, their character is thus blazoned by the sacred writer. *These were more noble [εὐνομεσποῖ] than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so: i. e. they examined the doctrine of Paul and Silas by the prophecies of the old testament, Acts xvii. 11.* Blessed be God, we of this nation enjoy this most valuable branch of christian liberty in its full extent. But here our adversaries object with more shew of reason, as the phrase is rendered in our translation, than solid argument, no scripture is of private interpretation, that is say the papists, no layman or private christian is to judge for himself in matters of religion, but is to be determined by the dictates either of the pope
or

or of a general council. Now in order to understand this, we must read the whole passage. 'Tis to be met with in the 1st chap. of the second epistle general of *Peter*, at the 20th and 21st verses. *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation, [ιδίας επιλυσεως,] for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.* Now I think it will be evident to any unprejudiced mind that don't read this passage with a bias upon him, that the meaning is no more than this; St. Peter had been recommending the scriptures of the old testament to their most serious study and regard, as thereby they would have an opportunity of discerning with what beauty and exactness the predictions therein recorded, had been accomplished in the sufferings and exaltation of the blessed Jesus. The prophets of old, says he, did not either preach or commit to writing, the result of their own imaginations, they were not guided by the impulse of an heated fancy: That the word *επιλυσις* often signifies impulse, as well as solution or interpretation, may easily be made appear from good authorities*.

Now since those holy men of God, *Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel* and the rest, did not commit

* Vid Poli synopsin in locum, vide quoque Budaeum et alios in voc.

mit to writing the bare product of an heated fancy, or their own sentiments, considered merely as men of sense, it necessarily follows, and consequently the highest regard should be paid to their declarations and predictions, that they were only as organs or passive instruments through which a divine spirit breathed, in order to impress and delight our minds with the most ravishing joy and melody, with the harmonious, entertaining, and improving sounds of evangelical pardon, peace, and complete salvation: for holy men of God spake as they were moved, [*φερομενοι*,] impelled, elevated, raised above their natural faculties by the Holy Ghost. 'Tis to me exceeding clear, that the sacred writers assigning this as a reason why no scripture is of private interpretation, if taken in the sense our adversaries put upon it, would have been quite foreign and impertinent; whereas, by the unforced, and, as I humbly think, genuine interpretation that has been given of it, every difficulty vanishes, and the right of private judgment, as we have represented it, is abundantly secured. This leads us to the

IId. Thing considerable in our text, and that is a very proper caution subjoined, not to abuse this glorious privilege. *Only use not your liberty as an occasion to the flesh.* Abuse not,

I. Your

1. Your freedom from the ceremonial dispensation, by giving needless offence to weaker minds: I have here in view, that celebrated passage, 1 Cor. viii. 13. compared with the xivth of the epistle to the Romans. *Wherefore if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.* Some have through a strange inattention, misunderstood these words of the Apostle, as though we must necessarily comply with the capricious humours of every impertinent person, as though we must be under the direction of every censorious pedant, what we shall eat and what we shall wear. Had this been the design of the Apostle, to injoyn a compliance with all the humours of such people, it would have been almost an impracticable thing, and we know God does not require impossibilities. What then it may be said is the scope of the Apostle? To what valuable purpose does his long discourse tend, which you may consult at your leisure in the paragraphs above referred to. I answer, the case is thus clearly stated by St. Paul: there were several it seems, who boasted of their superior knowledge, in comparison of their brethren the Jewish converts, who could not presently get over all the scruples of their education, having imbibed from their infancy, very strong prejudices in favour of meats and drinks, and, it may be, divers other ceremonial practices.

I know

I know and am persuaded, says this excellent person, by the Lord Jesus, 14th verse of the xivth chapter to the Romans. *That there is nothing unclean of itself, but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean: but if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably: destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died.* Now this is farther explained by what he tells us, chapter viii. of the first epistle to the Corinthians, at the 4th and 7th verses, *As concerning the eating those things that are sacrificed to idols; we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one: howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge, for some, with conscience of the idol, unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol, and their conscience being weak, is defiled; For, at the 10th verse, if any man see thee which hath knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him that is weak be emboldened to eat these things which are offered to idols?*

The grand danger was, it seems, which the apostle so earnestly cautions against, lest weaker christians who could not shake off all their scruples about meats offered to idols when they were invited to a feast by some of their heathen neighbours, or who when they saw their brethren, the jewish or gentile converts, boasting of their christian liberty, as being released from all distinctions of meats and

days by the more spiritual dispensation of the gospel; there was in this case a danger, lest rather than not be thought as advanced christians as their brethren, they should be emboldened to eat contrary to their consciences, or to practise some other things against the light of their own minds; which, however mistaken they might be, their brethren, who were of superior attainments, should tenderly bear with them, and forbear in their presence to drink wine and eat meats once prohibited, especially in an idol's temple: and I can't, by the way, help remarking the great candor, tenderness and charity, that St. Paul here inculcates, of which he himself was so shining an example for our imitation.

There is, in short, what divines term *scandalum acceptum non datum*, as well as there is, *scandalum datum et acceptum*. I am not at all fond of school-distinctions in general, but any that are useful may pass uncensured, like pearls amidst a heap of rubbish. Our Saviour himself gave great, not just offence to the scribes and pharisees, who were almost always cavilling at his conduct, for instance: *This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them*. But did he alter his conduct in this respect out of complaisance to their ill-natured caprice? Far from it, he vindicates his associating with publicans in hopes of doing them good, with a view to bring them back from the paths of iniquity and death. Here was
then

then no just reason for their finding fault : But to give occasion of offence to a humble and modest, though perhaps too scrupulous, christian, by continuing to practise what to us would be no great detriment to abstain from, this I think the generous spirit of our holy religion should instruct us to avoid. But

2dly, Don't abuse your christian liberty by taking encouragement to sin, because the pardoning grace of God under the gospel abounds. The gospel is no cloke for wilful iniquity. It is a noble, the only sweet and sure relief, for a sincere christian who is aiming at perfection in holiness, is exceedingly desirous of it, tho' he falls vastly short, being conscious of numerous unallowed defects. This induces him to pour out his Soul in that fervent language of the Psalmist, *Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!* To such, and such only the promises of the new covenant belong : for the encouragement of such as these, St. John writes with winning softness : *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not ; and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins.* 1 John ii. 1, 2. *If the son of God make us free, 'tis most certain we shall be free indeed, free not to sin but from sin, not only from its flaming guilt, but from its hateful tyranny and dominion : As free, says the apostle Peter, yet not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness or*

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wick.

wickedness, but as the servants of God. The same inspired writer complains of some who promised liberty to their deluded votaries, whilst they themselves were the servants of corruption, or slaves to their vices; for of whom, he justly adds, a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage. He seems to speak of the Gnostics, or followers of Simon Magus, who in that first age of the church, were so daring as to maintain, that high soaring speculations, expressed in great swelling words of vanity, were sufficient to save men, while they continued intirely regardless of their behaviour, so they did but zealously adhere to their infallible sect. But ye have not so learned Christ, as the great apostle excellently observes, if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus; that ye put off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, Ephesians iv. 20, 21, 22. Jesus did not appear to relax so much as any one obligation to duty, but rather to inforce it by the most endearing and by many superadded invigorating motives. He came to add oil to the wheels, to give nerves to our cheerful obedience, whilst he is the author of eternal salvation to them, and to none but them that are sincerely desirous of obeying him. His name is called Jesus, a common and a very just remark, because he saves his people not in, but from their sins,
And

And tho' the best of these have to conflict with the remains of a polluted nature, still as they would fain be better, and enter their protest against even their once most darling passions and favourite corruptions; this shews that sin has not the dominion over them, that they are dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord; that sin does not reign in their mortal bodies, so as to obey it in the lusts thereof, but that they yield themselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead. This is the strong emphatic language of the New Testament, and this is what every real christian in some degree experiences. But,

3dly, Abuse not your liberty or right of private judgment. This is done when persons under the notion of proving all things, give way to universal scepticism, when instead of proving all things that they might hold fast what is good, they pretend to examine and try all things, in order to hold fast nothing at all, or at least no good principles, from whence must flow a well regulated behaviour. Universal scepticism is one very censurable extreme, as infallibility, or rather groundless pretensions to it, is the other. Again, don't abuse the right you have to declare your sentiments, or of publishing one's thoughts, let not this be perverted to scurrility and profaneness. Let our searches after truth be attended with humility and modesty,

ty, especially our disquisitions of a religious nature should be quite divested of that petulant spirit of cavilling, and should be ever accompanied with that candor which throws a lustre upon every character ; for any to deal in ill-natur'd unmannerly expressions, gives at least, a shrewd suspicion that our cause is bad ; it can do no good, and may do injury to the very best of causes. Truth needs none of the wrath of man for its defence : it flourishes most and thrives best in a soil of fair-dealing and unclouded benevolence. Speaking the truth in love is a most admirable precept of our holy religion, which recommends itself to every impartial and dispassionate mind ; for by the same rule that I assume a power of controuling the sentiments of others with hard words, the opposite party may return the compliment, and perhaps with interest. To behave in this manner to our fellow-creatures and fellow-servants in the sight of God and of all thinking men, is, I doubt, a degree of persecution. I may and ought to defend what I take to be truth, and especially if it be, as I apprehend, very important, I ought to be faithful, 'tis my duty and glory to the very death, in hope of receiving a crown of life, when persecuted for what I dare not depart from, but then on no account am I to turn persecutor myself. 'Tis incumbent on me thus to keep the faith, but then this may and ought to be done without reviling

reviling language. God don't need your wrath, 'tis the exprefs declaration of the bible to work his righteoufnefs. To hereticate men, and very often for uncertain, and, if true, very trifling speculations, as is notoriously done by the church of Rome, to hereticate men fhall I be allow'd to repeat it? Persons perhaps of equal fincerity and greater abilities than ourfelves, may by fome, be termed zeal, but I fhould be afraid the great Saviour and judge of the world might deem it no other than a fmiting our fellow fervants. However we ought here to be extremely cautious, and for my part as I judge it fafer, fo had rather be found erring on the tender and charitable fide, than to indulge a fierce and over-bearing temper. I don't hereby defign to reflect on any perfon or party. Alas! it might too eafily be made appear, that almoft all parties have perfecuted in their turns, not only with the tongue and pen, but even with the fword, or at leaft with goals and confifcations. May not that of the great Saviour of mankind be too juftly applied to us all in the cafe before us. *He that is without fin among you let him caft the firft ftone.*

But here it may be objected, fuppofe where perfons are outrageous and unruly, where their tongues are licentious, or their pens dipped deep in gall, efpecially againft religion and virtue, may not the arm of the civil
magiftrate

magistrate be call'd in? To this it may be answered, that the liberty of the press is a very tender point, which without the last necessity should not be given up, and if authors keep within any tolerable bounds of decency, let the press lie open, and let their sentiments be communicated without the least danger of coercion: by tolerable bounds I mean, when men don't write professedly against religion and virtue, for if persons endeavour to set aside the eternal and immutable differences between good and evil, to confound vice and virtue, or to disprove the being of a God, they then may be said to unhinge all society, and to reduce us to a state of anarchy and confusion, in which case no doubt the civil magistrate has a right to interpose, for preserving peace and good order in the state. The words of that incomparable patron of liberty, the great Mr. *Locke*, are worth attending to on this occasion, 'tis in his excellent letter concerning toleration, p. 67. " Those, says he, are not at all
 " to be tolerated who deny the being of a
 " God, promises, covenants and oaths, which
 " are the bonds of human society, can have
 " no hold upon an atheist; besides also,
 " those that by their atheism undermine and
 " destroy all religion, can have no pretence
 " of religion whereupon to challenge the
 " privilege of a toleration." Thus far that admirable writer. However, as to all controversies

troverfies among profefling chriftians, as we have no bufinefs to require the aid of the civil magiftrate, fo the prefent happy government under which we live, has too much goodnefs to concern itfelf with the unhappy differences among ourfelves, unlefs by recommending moderation from the throne. A golden age in comparifon of former times! As to the affair of the unhappy Servetus, which has made fo much noife, and on whole account rather too ftrong reflections may have been made, to difparage the memory of a great reformer, I think with a * learned and celebrated divine among the Diffenters, that he was fitter for Bedlam than a ftake.

One would be far from pretending to juftify the treatment Servetus met with, but if it be confider'd that our reformers, good and great as they were, had but juft emerg'd from the darknefs of popifh ignorance and tyranny, fome grains of allowance, I would humbly venture to fay, might be made, without encouraging fuch a mifguided and intemperate zeal. And methinks this fhould be an everlafting caution to all parties, how they rufh upon fanguinary methods when they have it in their power, rather than practice the milder doctrine of the meek and lowly Jefus, who rebuked his two fiery dif-

D ciples

* Dr. Calamy in the preface to his difcourfes on the Trinity.

ciples when they were for abusing a miracle, saying, *Shall we command fire from heaven to destroy these impious Samaritans*, as Elias did, with that reply worthy of himself. *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of*; if fire must not be call'd from heaven on such an occasion, what is fire from earth but strange fire? What are all the terrors of the inquisition? what is fire from the tongues and pens of angry men but strange fire? Fire which may make men hypocrites, not real converts, fire which may destroy their bodies, their fortunes, their reputations, but never yet saved so much as one soul. Is it not surprising that what our glorious Saviour made the mark of a false church, should be blindly adopted by any that profess christianity, e. g. the papists. *He that killeth you thinketh that he doth God service*; and shall I be permitted to observe, venturing thro' the displeasure of none but the intemperate zealots of every denomination, that killing of characters is next to, if not as criminal in the divine sight as murdering of persons: whereas, the grand characteristick, our kind redeemer has made of all his disciples, the glorious badge which he has graced and dignified them with, is *that they love one another*. One would be apt to imagine, if we were to judge of christianity by the censorious conduct, by the bitter and rancorous expressions of too many of its professors, that our Saviour had said quite

quite the reverse, by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye hate one another. Thus in Germany 'tis too well known, that the Lutherans mortally hate a Calvinist, and the Calvinists a Lutheran.

To this will it be objected, what would you let in error like a flood? What shall men be allow'd, with impunity, to lead souls headlong to perdition? What shall persons be permitted to wrest the scriptures to their own destruction? To this it may be answered, who are to be the judges of this matter? May not a person of a different way of thinking from you, easily retort the invidious charge? May they not with equal gravity and assurance affirm, that, for aught appears to them, you are as liable to wrest the scriptures as they? God, Sirs, is the sole Lord of conscience. 'Tis a truly christian and protestant principle. To tell men their religious opinions are wrong, nay dangerous if you judge them so; thus far we may have authority to go, but not a jot farther, *for the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, patient, apt to teach, in meekness, instructing them that oppose themselves, if peradventure God may give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth, 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.* Besides, there are some doctrines, which though not essentially necessary to salvation, may be very valuable, and, in some sense im-

portant, which nevertheless all good people are not agreed in, but still they may agree to differ, endeavouring to comply with that golden injunction of the apostle. *As far as ye have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing, and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you,* Phil. iii. 15, 16. Shall it moreover be urged, that persons who don't maintain the principles we embrace, are not sincere in their inquiries, that they neglect prayer for divine assistance, and for the influences of God's holy spirit to guide them into truth. I ask, how can this be known to any but the great searcher of hearts? In the mean while, should not that charity or christian love, so beautifully describ'd by St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 7. as not only hoping, but believing all things, induce us to judge favourably of the conduct of others in the abovementioned respects? I can't here forbear transcribing an observation or two from the late great and good Dr. Watts, in his Essay on Uncharitableness: " If I may, says he, be permitted
 " to speak of myself, I might acquaint the
 " world with my own experience. After
 " some years spent in the perusal of contro-
 " versial authors, and finding them insuffi-
 " cient to settle my judgment and conscience
 " in some great points of religion, I resolved
 " to seek a determination of my thoughts
 " from the epistles of St. Paul, and especi-
 " ally

“ ally in that weighty doctrine of justifica-
 “ tion. I perused his letter to the Romans
 “ in the original, with the most fixed medi-
 “ tation, laborious study, and importunate
 “ requests to God for several months toge-
 “ ther; first without consulting any com-
 “ mentator, and afterwards called in the as-
 “ sistance of the best critics and interpreters.
 “ I very narrowly observed the daily motions
 “ of my own mind: I found it very hard to
 “ root out old prejudices, and to escape the
 “ danger of new ones. I met with some
 “ expressions of the apostle that swayed me
 “ towards one opinion, and others that in-
 “ clin’d the balance of my thoughts another
 “ way, and it was no easy matter to main-
 “ tain my judgment in an equal poise, till
 “ some just and weighty argument gave the
 “ determination; so many crossing notions,
 “ perplexing difficulties, and seeming repug-
 “ nancies lay in my way, that I most hear-
 “ tily bless the divine goodness that enabled
 “ me at last to surmount them all, and e-
 “ stablished my judgment and conscience in
 “ that glorious and forsaken doctrine of the
 “ justification of a sinner in the sight of
 “ God, by the imputation of a perfect right-
 “ eousness which is not originally his own.
 “ From my own experiment, continues this
 “ pious and judicious author, I can easily
 “ guess what confounding intricacies of
 “ thought others pass through in their ho-
 “ nest

" nest searches after truth. These conflicts
 " did exceedingly enlarge my soul and
 " stretched my charity to a vast extent. I
 " see, I feel, and am assured, that several
 " men may be very sincere, and yet enter-
 " tain notions in divinity, all widely dif-
 " ferent. I confess now and then some
 " opinions, or some unhappy occurrences
 " are ready to narrow and confine my af-
 " fections again, if I am not watchful over
 " myself, but I pray God to preserve up-
 " on my heart a strong and lasting remem-
 " brance of those days and those studies,
 " whereby he laid within me, the founda-
 " tion of so broad a charity." Thus far
 this excellent divine.

It may farther be suggested, with which
 I shall close this head, that since our Sa-
 viour denounced woes, and the holy apostle
 Paul his anathemas, and that sometimes in
 pretty severe language, may we not imitate
 such glorious patterns? May we not be per-
 mitted to rebuke men sharply that they
 might be found in the faith? To this it
 may most readily be answered, when you
 have the infallibility either of our Saviour and
 St. Paul or the extraordinary gifts of an
 evangelist. The great St. Paul might say
 and do many things in the fulness of his
 apostolic power which we have no right to
 imitate. Because he addressed Elymas in
 that awful severity of language, and, as it is
 highly

highly probable, under an immediate divine afflatus; *O full of all subtilty, thou child of the Devil, thou enemy of all righteousness.* Will this therefore warrant us to call hard names, to stigmatize and brand as with a black mark those who differ from us merely in sentiments. Besides, it is remarkable that those whom the apostle Jude, for instance, characterizes as *raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame*, &c. and those whom our Saviour and St. Paul stigmatizes, were men of exceeding immoral lives, of bad and corrupt conversations, either turning the grace of God into wantonness as the gnostics, or they were hypocritical Pharisees who pretended to a great deal of sanctity, while the general tenor of their actions manifestly contradicted their high professions; appearing with a sad and sour countenance, devouring widows houses, and at the same time, for a pretence made long prayers, saying, stand by thyself for I am holier than thou, straining at gnats and swallowing of camels, laying a mighty stress upon trifling punctilios, while they neglected the far weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and fidelity, taking all occasions to condemn those actions as sinful which were merely indifferent, and framing duties or works of supererogation which the divine being never commanded. 'Tis against such as these that our divine Saviour points all the artillery

artillery and thunder of his awful threatnings. So the Cretans whom Titus was ordered to rebuke sharpl yor cuttingly, [*αποτομως*,] were always liars, evil beasts, flow bellies, persons of a scandalous and profligate character. *Tit.* i. 12. compared with 16. *Who art thou on the other hand*, says the great apostle, *who judgest another man's servant to his own master, he stands or falls*: and again, in that same chapter, *but why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, &c.* so then every one of us must give account of himself to God, *Rom.* xiv. 10, 12. Let us not then under any pretence whatever, indulge scurrillity of language. Let us not thus pervert our happy liberty, let us not say or do any thing that looks like seating ourselves in the divine tribunal, or dethroning our infinitely wise and omniscient judge, tho' but for a moment; but let us judge rather not to throw a stumbling block in the way of any christian brother. Which leads us to the

IIIId. Thing in my text, *but by love serve one another*. This is elsewhere explained in that above cited passage of St. Peter, *as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God*, 1 *Pet.* ii. 16. From whence it is evident, that in serving one another we serve and glorify God,

God ; and indeed what is the whole second table of the law compriz'd in, but that golden, that melodious, that enchanting term love, for as in the verse immediately after our text, *all the law is fulfilled in one word, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, love worketh no ill to his neighbour, therefore love is the fulfilling of the law* ; nay it goes farther, 'tis conversant about doing him all the good that can possibly be effected. All beneficent actions, if they don't proceed from a principle of cordial love, and of being, as the apostle phrases it, *kindly affectioned one to another*, lose half their intrinsic value. The manner of performing a generous action is what renders it sterling. The lustre of many charitable acts is sadly tarnished by untoward circumstances that attend them. 'Tis melancholy to consider that so many are crouding all their cares and concerns within that little narrow circle, themselves, a circumference greatly magnified in their vain and swelling imaginations. However, bad as the times are, it must be owned, and I question not, will be recorded to the honour of the present age, that never was a greater flow of public spirited and useful charities, never was benevolence and humanity more conspicuous among all ranks and degrees of people, and, which is very remarkable, without any of those superstitious

views which for the most part produce those charities in other countries; but still there is room for exhortation to abound yet more and more: and I will farther add that nothing is wanting to render those excellent benevolences compleat, but that all who are so laudably engaged therein, would carefully endeavour in dependance on that grace which is sufficient for them to perform them with a view to the divine glory, and from a principle of supreme love to him in and thro' the great Redemer. This I would hope is the case of several whose hearts and souls seem swallowed up in such godlike benefactions. Thus I believe it is with many more, than some of a too narrow spirit may be willing to allow. If it be enquired what inducing motives are there to engage, to animate and inflame us to become common blessings to all around us, or in the alluring language of our text, *by love to serve one another?* I answer, numerous croud in from every quarter. I shall single out the following.

I. Nothing tends more to the dissolution of any society whether civil or sacred than want of love. Love which may be defined, as the result of a cleaving to God, our cleaving to one another with full purpose of heart. Love denotes union and delight, but if ye bite and devour one another as in the subsequent context, *take heed ye be not consumed*

sumed one of another. Nothing tends more to the ruin of any interest, than strife and contention. 'Tis our Lord's maxim. *A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.* Divide et impera, is what the emissaries of Rome are continually acting upon, To set protestants together by the ears, that in the end they may weaken and destroy them all. Let us therefore watch against the designs of our common adversary. Let protestants of all denominations be exhorted to love one another, for the future more than ever.

2. There is no injunction carries it's own reward in it more than love. 'Tis not only our Saviour's new commandment which denotes its excellence and importance, but it is the high road to solid peace and pleasure. In keeping this, if in keeping any divine command, there is a great reward. Love attunes all our jarring and discordant passions, renders difficult things easy, and easy things much more pleasant. 'Tis the very air of heaven. How balsamic to the human mind are those divine graces and virtues specified, 5th chapter of this epistle, 22d, 23d. verses. We feel ourselves just as we should and would be, when those graces abound in us which are there stiled, *the fruit of the spirit ! such as love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.* Survey the odiousness of the con-

trary dispositions, the hideous deformity of an opposite character. By way of contrast, consider the deplorable situation of one abandoned, to the turbulence of his passions: How restless, like the troubled sea! How uncomfortable to themselves, and to all who have any concern with them! How unamiable, like Ishmael, their hand against every man, and every man's hand against them. Hated and dreaded they may be whilst living, especially if persons of figure and fortune: by few or none cordially beloved, and at length, die secretly unlamented.

3dly, As has been already hinted, love is the temper of heaven. There is no being prepared for the enjoyments and employments of a future world, without this queen of graces. We are expressly told in that admirable 13th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, *That if we have not charity, i. e. Love to God, to fellow-christians, and to our fellow-men, we are nothing*, ver. 2. And at the 8th verse, *Charity never faileth*. And again ver. 13, *And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, but the greatest of these is charity*. Why? because when faith terminates in the beatific vision, and when hope is swallowed up in the fruition of the most divine and ravishing objects, then love to God, to fellow-saints and angels, shall glow, shall rise higher and higher still in their glorified breasts, in a sort of infinite progression throughout the
immense

immense ages of an happy eternity. What a noble summary description of the gospel and its excellent effects on the souls of men, are we favoured with by the apostle Peter, 1st chapter of his 2d epistle, from the 3d to the 12th verse: *According as his divine power, hath given unto us all things pertaining to life and godliness, thro' the knowledge of him who hath called us to glory and virtue, &c. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful, &c.* for so at the 11th verse, an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Once more,

4thly, We hereby resemble God the greatest and the best of beings, as is more than hinted by St. John in that pathetic address. *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; he that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God, for God is love.* 1 John iv. 7, 8. When our divine master exhorts us to the imitation of the blessed God, saying, *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your father which is in heaven is perfect.* Is not this exhortation founded upon love, love to our very enemies, and much more to our christian brethren? Again, In

In the 5th place, Walk in love, be that the delightful orderly sphere in which you continually move ; be that the healthful element in which you constantly breath : *Be ye therefore imitators of God as dear children ; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.* So acceptable was this his sacrifice for our sakes, to the divine Father, Ephes. v. 1, 2. This indeed, tho' not mentioned first in order, is the sublimest and most engaging motive of all. Thus the sacred writer seems to represent it, 1 Joh. iv. from the 9th to the 12th verse inclusively. What but the highest and most disinterested love, could induce Jesus the saviour to appear in the form of a servant ? Love ran like a golden thread thro' all the obedience and sufferings of his spotless beneficent life, and thro' all the agonies of his amazing death. There is no incentive like this, when rightly understood and improved, to the practice of universal holiness.

Religion! thou the soul of happiness
And groaning Calvary of thee, There shine
The noblest truths, there strongest motives
sting,

There sacred violence assaults the soul.
Can love allure us, or can terror awe?
He weeps—The falling drop puts out the sun.

He

He sighs—The sigh earth's deep foundation
 shakes. As the inimitable *Young* di-
 vinely soars.

Should not this inexhausted theme, the boundless, unfathomable love of a bleeding Jesus, effectually constrain us to lay aside all our little animosities, and to love one another out of a pure heart fervently? did he our common Lord and Redeemer suffer and die to break down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and shall we be fond of party names and distinctions? Shall we dare ourselves to erect new walls of partition infinitely displeasing to him, and injurious to one another? Shall the cry still go on among us, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas? Do we thus requite all his tenderness and grace, Oh base ingratitude! Oh our obdurate and rocky hearts! Lastly, the glorious providences of this day, as well as all our other deliverances and salvations, which are many and great, should excite us to a diligent and cheerful discharge of the duty recommended in our text, so extremely conducive to our happiness, *by love to serve one another*. The peaceful proclamation of his late majesty king George I. of blessed memory, the disappointment of all the enemies of our religion and country, in their hopes of a popish pretender; the continued and stable enjoy-

enjoyment of our civil liberties, of our rights
 and properties as Englishmen and christians,
 which had been settled on such solid found-
 ations at the glorious revolution, and far-
 ther confirmed to us by that excellent prince
 now reigning, who is the delight of all the
 wise, and good, and unprejudiced part of
 mankind. Are not these things matter of
 joyful praise? Should they not inflame us
 with the most lively gratitude? Should they
 not cause our hearts to glow and burn with-
 in us? Do not these kind appearances in our
 favour furnish out ardent and abundant
 thanksgivings to God, to that God who is
 eminently the God of salvation to his
 British Israel, and to whom belong the is-
 sues from death. Who has saved us over
 and over again, and that almost miraculouf-
 ly; who has often made our extremity of
 distress his opportunity of shining forth for
 our help and rescue; when we were ready
 to say our hopes are blasted, we are cut off
 for our parts, we found to our exceeding
 joy and comfort that it was not so on God's
 part. He has often brought us to the mount,
 that in the mount he might be seen, to allude
 to that remarkable dispensation of the divine
 majesty with respect to the patriarch Abra-
 ham. Has he not turn'd for us the thickest
 and most horrible gloom, to use a beautiful
 eastern phrase, into the glorious eyelids of
 the morning? Would you be truly sensible
 of

of the advantages we enjoy, go to Turkey, take a view of the arbitrary measures there pursued, the lives and fortunes of all the subjects entirely precarious, liable every moment to be forfeited at the caprice of a sanguinary tyrant. If you would know somewhat more of the value of this inestimable jewel, Liberty, go into a neighbouring nation, take an attentive and shocking view of the dragoon-ing of protestants, their wresting that key of knowledge, the New Testament, out of their hands, ravishing their dear children from them, those pieces of themselves, in order to train them up in all the superstitions and cruelties of popery. What numbers of our protestant brethren are there groaning, either in dismal dungeons, or chain'd to the oar of an infamous gally. Look into Spain or Portugal, and contemplate the horrors of an infernal inquisition, and bless God that you are free, that you are possesst of property, that you sit under your own vine and your own fig-tree, *none making you afraid*, as the scripture elegantly phrases it; and especially be thankful, that you not only have a right to judge for yourselves in the important concerns of religion, but are secured in the full enjoyment of that right, without any, the least compulsion. Whatever some ungrateful people among ourselves may suggest, we are the envy of other nations, who are ready to cry out,

F

O for-

*O fortunatos nimium sua se bona norint
Anglos! —*

Let us not therefore by our intestine divisions, by our luxury and other enormities, provoke the Almighty to abandon and give us up. He seems, if I may be allowed the expression, loth to do it. How frequently has he, as it were, shook his rod over us, still unwilling to strike the fatal blow. Many a time has he delivered us from domestic insurrections and rebellions, from the pestilence, famine, and devouring sword; those three signal arrows in his quiver. Whereas for our infidelity on the one hand, and our uncharitableness on the other, we have deserved the sorest calamities, the severest judgments. He might justly, long ere this, in the course of his over-ruling providence, have deprived us of all those mercies, our liberties both civil, and sacred in particular, which we have so notoriously abused. Let us then be prevailed on to return to him, from whom we have so deeply revolted. Let us prize our privileges more than ever, and no longer imitate that murmuring, provoking temper of the Israelites, who were almost always discontented they knew not why; but let us learn in the first place, to be exceeding thankful to the God of all mercy and compassion, for the immunities and advantages he is still
fa-

favouring us with, and to our good governors, and especially to our only rightful and lawful sovereign king George, as supreme, for all his paternal care and concern for our welfare ; and let there be no distinction for the future heard among us, but that of those who are for the true christian and protestant religion, and for the liberties of their country, in opposition to popery and slavery. In fine, may it be the earnest concern and endeavour of every individual in their respective stations, to cultivate vital religion in our own hearts, and to set the most shining examples to our families and to all mankind, of every thing that is virtuous and praise-worthy, of love to God and our neighbour, of eminent thankfulness for the mercies we are daily receiving under the best of governments, whose hands we ought, as far as in us lies, in our several spheres, to strengthen and support ; hoping and ardently praying, that all the blessings and advantages of a protestant and free people, may be transmitted down to our descendants of the latest posterity.

F I N I S.

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